

Statement of Representative French Hill (AR-02)
before the House Committee on Natural Resources
Members' Day Hearing
June 4, 2019

Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Republican Bishop, and distinguished Committee Members, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony before you today.

I am appearing before the Committee today to request timely consideration of a bill that is important to the constituents of my district and the state of Arkansas.

My testimony today is to ask for the Committee's consideration of H.R. 1225, the Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act, sponsored by Ranking Member Bishop. H.R. 1225 has 228 cosponsors and is thoroughly bipartisan.

Federal land management agencies are facing a deferred maintenance backlog that, if unaddressed, will continue to threaten the safety and quality of visitors' enjoyment of our national parks, wildlife refuges, and other public lands.

The Department of Interior's total deferred maintenance backlog currently stands at \$16 billion, including \$11.6 billion within our National Park System.

Though I don't sit on the Natural Resources Committee, this issue hits close to home.

The total deferred maintenance backlog in my district alone is approximately \$369,000; that amount climbs to roughly \$42 million throughout the state.

Arkansas features eight remarkable units of the National Park System, including the Buffalo National River, Hot Springs National Park, and Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site. These sites are American treasures, and the longer we wait to make needed repairs, the costlier the repairs become.

Rural economies throughout the country benefit greatly from National Park visitation. The positive economic impact of tourism in Arkansas continues to be significant. In 2016 alone, visitors who traveled to Arkansas spent an estimated \$7.7 billion and supported more than 100,000 jobs, according to the Department of Parks and Tourism.

If trails, roads, campgrounds, and other facilities are continually closed due to repairs, tourism is harmed. Hotels, restaurants, and other vendors rely on functioning parks for revenue.

I support H.R. 1225 and hope the Committee will soon move this bipartisan bill one step closer to properly and efficiently fix our parks and other public lands.

Thank you once again for allowing me to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.